



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
District of New Hampshire*

*Federal Building
55 Pleasant Street, Room 352
Concord, New Hampshire 03301*

603/225-1552

MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release
Tuesday, August 30, 2005

Contact: Thomas P. Colantuono
United States Attorney
Linda Tomlinson
Media Relations
(603) 225-1552

NEW HAMPSHIRE POISED TO TACKLE METH PLAGUE

CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE - At a meeting yesterday, hosted by New Hampshire Health and Human Services Commissioner John Stephen and addressed by Governor John Lynch, New Hampshire's federal, state and local law enforcement, legislative, human services, and education leaders discussed plans to develop a comprehensive strategy to fight the growing menace of methamphetamine abuse in our state. Methamphetamine is a highly addictive and very dangerous drug which has been sweeping across the country. Recent arrests of New Hampshire meth dealers and seizures of eleven clandestine meth labs this year have shown that meth abuse has come to New Hampshire.

U.S. Attorney Tom Colantuono and New Hampshire Attorney General Kelly Ayotte, as well as Colonel Frederick H. Booth of New Hampshire State Police, and President of the New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police Nathaniel Sawyer and Carroll County Sheriff Scott Carr, President of the New Hampshire Sheriff's Association, all committed the full resources of federal and state law enforcement to this struggle. Commissioner Stephen discussed his department's plans for additional treatment of meth addicts, protection for children endangered by meth labs, and an outreach and education program to notify New Hampshire parents and the general public about the danger of this killer drug. Members of the New Hampshire Legislature's "Meth Caucus" discussed their ongoing work on legislation for the 2006 session.

New Hampshire will be following the lead of the federal government which has recently stepped up its nationwide efforts against the rapidly spreading meth epidemic. In a press conference held today at the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Administrator Karen P. Tandy announced the results of the DEA-led "Operation Wildfire," the largest nationally coordinated law enforcement initiative designed to target all levels of the methamphetamine manufacturing and distribution chain in the United States and continue the fight against the spread of methamphetamine.

MORE

This unprecedented law enforcement effort involved over 200 U.S. cities and resulted in the

arrest of 427 individuals. The streamlined efforts of federal, state, and local law enforcement resulted in the seizure of 209 pounds of methamphetamine, 201,035 tablets of pseudoephedrine, 158 kilograms of pseudoephedrine powder and 224,860 tablets of ephedrine. Fifty six clandestine laboratories were seized in the nationwide sweep and 30 endangered children were removed from their meth environments. Finally, 28 vehicles and 123 weapons were seized during the raids and 96 search warrants were executed.

“The scourge of methamphetamine demands strong partnerships and innovative solutions to fight the devastation it leaves behind,” said Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales. “Through “Operation Wildfire,” we have joined with state and local law enforcement to successfully pursue meth peddlers and producers in over 200 cities. The Department of Justice is committed to using every available resource to ensure that our streets and neighborhoods are safe and that the methamphetamine problem is brought to an end.”

“Operation Wildfire” was successful, because of the numerous law enforcement and drug diversion tactics practiced by the DEA and their state and local law enforcement partners including: undercover meth purchases; meth laboratory identification and seizures; execution of search and arrest warrants; identification and dismantlement of large-scale meth trafficking organizations; deployment of DEA Mobile Enforcement Teams to assist state and local authorities in their meth investigations; and the investigations of pseudoephedrine importers, grey-market wholesalers, and retailers.

“The consequences of meth are undeniable-for the abuser, for the trafficker, for the environment, for communities, and for the innocent children who live in filth and neglect,” said DEA Administrator Karen P. Tandy. “Methamphetamine abuse has ruined families, destroyed neighborhoods and put a tremendous strain on all levels of law enforcement and social services. This historic enforcement effort illustrates our commitment to extinguishing this plague and protecting innocent Americans from the harmful ripple effects meth leaves behind.”

The Justice Department and the DEA have been fighting methamphetamine for over 20 years and “Operation Wildfire” demonstrates the sustained efforts of the Department to target an unprecedented rise in the use, trafficking and manufacture of methamphetamine nationwide and to make advances on the national and international front to combat this unique drug. The actions of the past week represent the largest single enforcement effort against meth to date, but it is far from the first. Last week the DEA announced the dismantling of three major international drug transportation organizations that each month brought in enough meth for more than 22,000 users in the United States.

“The enforcement actions announced today provide a shock to the system of meth trafficking and production,” ONDCP Director John Walters said. “As we have learned from experience with other dangerous drugs, a balanced strategy of prevention, treatment, and law enforcement is critical in making progress against this serious drug threat.”

“Operation Wildfire,” where dedicated law enforcement officials at all levels worked cooperatively, demonstrates that the fight against this highly addictive drug requires coordination at all levels. The Department is committed to working with our state and local law enforcement partners to address this destructive drug nationwide.

Community involvement among neighbors, parents, community leaders, schools, and businesses is also an essential component in this fight. It is extremely important to educate young people about the irreversible harm to the body and damage to the quality of life this drug leaves in its wake. In conjunction with this enforcement effort, DEA launched a new website today as part of its efforts to raise public awareness about the dangers of methamphetamine. The anti-drug website, www.justthinktwice.com <<http://www.justthinktwice.com/>>, gives teens and their parents the straight facts about methamphetamine.

For more information about methamphetamine, please also visit: www.MethResources.gov <<http://www.MethResources.gov>>.

#